1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Quite A Number
291 of men still wear the Lepcha dress, though the original Lepcha head-
[177] dress—a small sugar-loaf of woven bamboo surmounted by a feather—has been almost completely abandoned in favour of the biretta-like Tibetan hat decorated with coral beads. Hats are only worn on fairly ceremonious occasions. Lamas, and a few of the richer and older laymen, wear the outer dress of the Tibetan lama —a thick red, purple or dark-blue sleeved garment, joined from the waist to below the knees, and buttoning from the waist to the throat.

[286] Until the beginning of this century Lepchas used to weave all their own cloth, but nowadays only a couple of women bother to weave; people wear instead ready-made and fairly shoddy clothes. These bought clothes have had one rather serious effect, to my mind; children are usually dressed in the adapted cast-offs of their elders, and the poor and thin material in the cold winter
[164] renders young children even more susceptible to colds and bronchial trouble and has probably increased the infantile mortality. Very few people over the age of ten were troubled by colds and coughs—it would seem as though they acquired, if they survived, some sort of immunity—but there was hardly one child who was not, and the most frequent request which was made to me was for medicine to relieve these complaints. Three young children in Lingthem or
[75] the neighbourhood died of bronchial trouble during my stay there. Adults take reasonable precautions against chills, changing their clothes and taking a hot drink as soon as possible after a wetting; children who are not with older people often neglect to do so.

361 There would appear to be a considerable difference in humidity
184 and temperature between the portion of Zongu which faces the Teesta and that which faces the Talung river; the former is considerably warmer, as the cultivation of sugar-cane, manioc, and other subtropical plants shows, and it would appear that the rainfall is less. The inhabitants of the Teesta side are geographically nearer the main mule-road between Tibet and India; but it does not appear and is not believed that this propinquity with the outside world has modified the character or habits of these people in any way; they are considered to be essentially similar to the people of the Talung valley and there is constant intermarriage all through the district.

On the far side of the Talung valley the ground is excessively rough and precipitous and is to a great extent not amenable to cultivation. Although geographically outside Zongu the few settlements are administratively part of it, being attached to the bigger

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

286 The weaving of cloth is, as has already been said, now almost extinct in Zongu; in Lingthem only a couple of women—the wives of Datoop and Jiroong—weave at all regularly. Lepcha cloths are extremely finely woven; nearly all are in striped patterns, sometimes over a plain, and sometimes over a patterned background. I have been shown such cloths further ornamented with needlework embroidery, but I did not see any so enhanced in Zongu. Although weaving is now almost a lost art, the spindle is considered the [562] typical feminine symbol, as the arrow is the masculine one; and in stories the heavy bar of the loom is the woman's chief weapon.

301 Although no attempt is made to add 'beauty' to the ordinary objects and surroundings of life, both men and women wear a certain amount of jewellery. The men wear turquoise ear-rings and rings, the women heavy and elaborate necklaces of big and usually unworked semi-precious stones, often with a charm-box of fretted gold or silver inlaid with turquoise and coral suspended from them, and also occasionally brooches and bracelets; but all these jewels [556] are bought ready-made. They are considered to enhance the beauty of the wearer; they are also a display of wealth and the only possible form of investment. Young people occasionally display a certain amount of coquetry in their dress, but the effect is usually unfortu- [515] nately marred for the stranger owing to the Lepchas' habit of not washing their bodies.

iv

342 Nowadays new houses are built very rarely. According to Chala Mandal—the head of the village of Lingthem, and also of the smaller village of Panung to the east with ten houses, and Lik-lyang (five houses) Salim and Safo (three houses each) on the other side of the Talung river—only four new houses have been built in the [592] present century. Ordinarily the members of a Lepcha household do not separate, but if the family gets too numerous, or if brothers, either real or classificatory, do not agree, the household will split and the land be divided and the younger brother will build a house of his own. Three of the four new houses—those of Ongden, Kurma and Nahyeun—were built for this reason. In the case of the fourth house—that of Katel—the situation was more complicated 342 and irregular. Katel, a man from a village on the far side of Zongu, 592 married a woman of Lingthem, an orphan who had been brought up in the Mandal's house, and took her home to his village. But

3:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

troughs, filled with water, over springs, where birds come to drink or on the tops of trees.

An automatic spear trap (*sa lak*) is used for killing deer and sometimes a number of such traps are set, should a man-eating tiger roam around a settlement. In this case, people are warned to stay in the houses until the hunters have removed the traps again. The spear-traps are set with great care and at a certain hight, the hunter calculating the size of the tiger from its footprints. The spear-trap is made as follows: A huge bamboo tube is cut lengthwise and firmly fixed at a certain height and position with the help of several bamboo supports. Then a long piece of bamboo is fastened horizontally above the ground — at the same height of the bamboo tube — and bent strongly backwards until one end of it reaches the bamboo tube, where it is then held in its spanned position by means of a simple cock. A string is fastened to the latter and stretched low across the jungle path. At last a strong piece of bamboo, the front-end of which has been cut to a sharp point and usually poisoned, is placed in the tube as a missile. — Usually another string, also connected with the cock, is spanned breast high and further away in the direction from which a man might approach. If somebody then stumbles unaware into the trap, the missile is released beforehand without causing harm.

A small cross-bow trap (*sä lak tyäk*) is used for killing rats. It consists of a miniature cross-bow which aims into a bamboo tube, closed at its further end. The bow-string is cocked over one end of a movable bamboo stick, the other end of it, to which some bait is attached, reaching into the bamboo tube. By a slight pull at the bait, the stick, which holds back the bow-string, is moved and the arrow thus released. — It may be mentioned in this connection that poisoned food is also often laid out for killing rats, mice and other animals, who harm the crops.

Jungle fowl is sometimes caught with the help of a tent-like net. Its top is loosely hung up on a branch and its sides are fastened to the ground. On one side only, an entrance is left by lifting the flap

3: Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

of the net and supporting it with a stick. Some corn is placed as bait on the ground inside the net and the hunter then hides himself in a nearby bush. Should some fowl enter the net, the hunter hits the stick supporting the flap with a stone, thus closing the trap, or he simply begins to shout; the fowl flies up, the net is detached from the branch and falls on top of the prey.

While most of the before-mentioned traps can be easily handled by a single man, in some cases, especially in big game hunt, the cooperation of several hunters is necessary. Huge camouflaged pitfalls (*tŭng bóng*), mostly with sharp spikes at the bottom — made of a small, but very hard kind of bamboo (*po yóng tsu*) — were constructed for trapping elephants and rhinos. For catching the latter, a spot in the jungle had to be located first, where a rhino would habitually come to answer its call of nature. Lepcha hunters claim that the rhino then usually begins to walk backwards and easily falls into a pit.

To catch leopards or tigers alive, a heavy cage with a trap door was constructed; in this case, a living bait was used. Small cages with trap doors are sometimes placed in the fields, to catch monkeys who cause damage to the crops.

The hunting of wild pigs is often carried out by a group of hunters. At first, rows of huge bamboo spikes are erected under a cliff and a number of men, forming a beating line, try to chase the wild pigs towards the cliff, from where they eventually drop on the spikes set below.

Occasionally beating lines are formed to drive animals towards a line of archers. In the driving hunt, fire is never used as the Lepchas fear that a fire in the jungle might get easily out of control and become a danger to men and their property.

Fishing

A few among the Lepchas, mostly those whose dwellings lie close to a mountain river, practise fishing, but as in hunting, fishing also

3:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

226 serves only to supply some food in addition to that obtained by tilling the fields and raising cattle. The following fishing devices are used by the Lepchas:

An ordinary fishing rod (*vór ham*) of bamboo, with a string and an iron hook (*vór*), upon which a bait is placed. — Similar to this is a simple device, certainly more ancient, called *hryeng*. Here the hook is substituted by a short, sharp piece of bamboo, which gets stuck in the throat of the fish.

Sometimes, a series of baited hooks is immersed in a river. The end of every line is wound around heavy stones lying on the bank and each string is then bent to form a sharp angle, being held in this position by a small stone. Should a fish get caught, the line will be moved out of its position and the fisherman who after some time comes to control the trap will thus recognize that a fish has been hooked.

226 Various kinds of nets, mostly made of the fibres of creeper plants,
286 are used; the most frequent type of net is the so-called *sŭng lí*, a conical throwing net. When spread out it is in the average some 140 cms high and its diameter measures approximately 160 cms. Around its opening, oblong pieces of lead are fastened and a long, strong rope is attached to its upper part. The fisherman, standing in the river, winds the rope loosely over his arm and then at a favourable moment throws the net quickly over the fish.

226 *Tŭk shor*: A simple bamboo trap, in the average some 60 cms long and 30 cms in diameter. To construct this device, a strong piece of bamboo is cut lengthwise, to three quarters of its total length, into a great number of sections. These sections are then bent apart and held in this position by a woven bamboo ring, the trap thus taking the form of a funnel. — Usually, several *tŭk shor* are placed in a row, near a stony barrier in the river, where fish are likely to jump and might thus fall into the trap, fig. 1.

Kŭr vyo: A pocket, made of bamboo; also the *kŭr vyo* is fastened to a barrier in the river, to catch the fish who are trying to jump the obstacle.

8:Nebesky-Wojkowitz--1 E-5 (1950-1953) 1953 AK5 Lepcha AK5

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/269/ New Acquisitions from Sikkim and Tibet

by René Nebesky-Wojkowitz

One of the results of my three-years of ethnographic research in the Sikkim-Tibet border region, which I concluded in February, 1953, was the establishment of collections for the Ethnographic Museum /Museum für Völkerkunde/ in Vienna. The majority of the acquired objects are household implements, articles of clothing, ceremonial paraphernalia, and weapons of the Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the Himalaya kingdom of Sikkim. The Lepcha tribe, related in race and language to the Tibetans, has in the course of the last three centuries suffered a progressive narrowing of its living area as a result of the penetration of stronger neighbors. It now numbers only 30,000 members, most of whom live in Sikkim proper. A few scattered Lepcha settlements are still to be found in the vicinity of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and the Nepalese district of Ilam, and in two valleys of Bhutan. Because of extensive adoption of the customs of Nepalese immigrants, who today form the largest population group of Sikkim, the Lepchas have sacrificed many of their native characteristics. The establishment of this first Lepcha collection therefore was very difficult, for most of the objects formerly used by the Lepchas have been replaced in more recent times by products of Nepalese, Indian, or even European origin.

The household implements included in the collection are made for the most part of bamboo; we find among them variously shaped vessels, spoons and spatulas, a churn-staff /Butterstampfer/, baskets, a grain riddle, strainers, a scale with one balance as well as wooden dishes of varying sizes, which are used for the preparation of millet beer, the alcoholic beverage preferred by the Lepchas. The tribe's art of weaving, which today is practically extinct, is demonstrated by a hand loom containing an almost completed piece of weaving; it shows—just as a second, already completed strip of weaving does

286 --characteristic Lepcha patterns. The threads used for the weaving
[386] of cloth were formerly dyed with vegetable matter, of which likewise
a few samples were brought along. Among the articles of clothing
291 there is a complete woman's costume with the pertinent ornaments:
301 two large needles connected by a silver chain, a pair of earrings set
with corals, as well as two necklaces -- one mainly of turquoise and
the other consisting of corals and blue glass beads. A hat made of
reed and types of nettle and a pair of men's earrings decorated with
turquoises were acquired as especially characteristic articles of the
garb formerly customary for Lepcha men.

534 [270] As far as musical instruments are concerned, the collection comprises three flutes of varying size -- one of which is a double flute -- a jewsharp, a gong with wooden drumsticks, as well as two old war drums whose cylinders consist of copper. They were presented
[431] by bs Tan hdzin rnam rgyal, the sixth king of Sikkim (born 1769, ascended the throne in 1780, died in Lhasa in 1793) to the Lepcha chieftain of Sukmi, who bore the Tibetan title of "Dsöngpön" (r dzong dpon, "bailiff"), as an acknowledgment of faithful war service.

756 A few especially valuable articles of the collection are parts of
[523] the equipment of a Mun priestess (a pouch with a carrying strap, decorated with eagles' claws, bird bills, the teeth of wild animals, and shells; plumes serving as a headdress; and parts of a rosary with a bell) which had been handed down for about three centuries in the family of a well-known Mun priestess who died a few years ago: Norkit
[796] Lepchani from the village of Seket. This equipment, of which only one similar specimen is known in Sikkim, was occasionally used by a Mun priestess in the king's palace at Gangtok during the ceremonies that take place annually in the night before the ceremony of the Lama dance in honor of the mountain god Gangs chhen mdzod lnga. In re-
756 gard to other objects used in the original pre-Buddhist religion of the
771 Lepchas, which were likewise acquired, the following should be named: amulets, magic wands, little baskets for keeping substances for magic healing, a little scaling ladder [Steigbaum] used at the burial of the
[766] Lepcha priests known as Bong thing, which was supposed to aid the soul of the Bong thing in its ascent to heaven -- one of the many evidences of the shaman ideas that are deeply rooted in the Lepcha religion --, a gong used by the Yaba priests, and paraphernalia for performing ceremonies in honor of the ancestral spirits, local divinities, and for the appeasement of the demons that were unleashed during the wars of the priests during which they used magic.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

places made of five stones. The third stone in the middle is common to both and is long enough to support a kettle on each of its outer extremities. Since the stones are placed with a view to holding larger kettles little iron tripods with rings are placed between the stones so as to permit the use of little kettles. Wood is used for fuel. About 1 and ½ meter above the fire a bamboo framework shelf is suspended for holding the kitchen utensils, fuel and other articles. The fireplace stretches across the entire width of the house, as it is the chief work-room, dining-room and, at night, the dormitory. In addition to this there are other little rooms shut off by wooden partitions. Some of these have a roof made of bamboo slats. All types of belongings are stored up over this ceiling which can be approached by the help of a tree trunk notched at intervals to serve as stairs. Occasionally one finds an additional partition which serves as an altar on which sacrifices are offered. This is, very likely, a borrowing from Buddhism.

The pig sties are sometimes located under the house, sometimes at the side. Near the house are situated the stables for cattle and goats and the poultry cages, together with other store houses. The entire settlement in some cases is completely enclosed with a bamboo fence.

Individual farmhouses are as a rule all by themselves. But there are also settlements which comprise of two, three or four houses. This kind of dwelling, a kind of building on piles, is characteristic of the Rong, but has its parallels in South-East Asia and South China.

The ancient costume of the Rong consists of two coarse striped widths of cloth which are held in place over the shoulders by means of a clasp, and about the loins with the aid of a cloth girdle. It reaches up to the knees. Both men and women wear trousers which come below the knees. Sometimes the men wear a short shirt, while the women wear a bodice. This was the ancient costume and the material for this was woven by the Lepchas themselves. Today the practice of weaving has almost died out. The Lepchas purchase ready-made materials. In place of the old style the women have taken over the Tibetan style in an ever increasing degree; the long dress without sleeves (the Tibetan